

Questar customers to see rate decrease

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Utahns living along the Wasatch Front are about to see a slight decrease on their monthly natural gas bills.

The Utah Public Service Commission this week issued an order that allows Questar Gas beginning Feb. 1 to reduce its rates by \$4.6 million, or about \$3.81 a year for the typical Utah homeowner.

The decrease means that Utahns no longer will be paying the gas company to help cover the costs of removing troublesome carbon dioxide from its natural gas so it can burn safely in their homes.

Questar spokesman Chad Jones termed the PSC's order the "last piece of paper in a 10-year saga."

Now, instead of processing its natural gas to remove carbon dioxide, Questar intends to blend natural gases with different heat values together to produce a fuel that can safely be used in home appliances.

Questar's decision to remove the charges from its customers' bills signals that the dispute that began in the late 1980s over whether its customers should help it pay to process its gas finally may be over.

At that time, Questar Pipeline started to accept onto its system methane produced from coal beds near Price. That natural gas needed additional processing to raise its heat value before it could burn safely.

After years of debate, setbacks and legal maneuvering - one

Utah Supreme Court decision resulted in the utility refunding \$29 million in processing charges - Questar Gas finally received approval from state regulators to collect the \$4.6 million in annual processing costs from customers, charges that the PSC's order eliminates.

Questar, though, has a general rate case pending before the PSC in which it asks for permission to raise its rates by \$27 million, or 7 percent, starting no later than August 2008. If that rate increase is approved the average customer bill will go up by about \$3.92 a month.